

# LSC Delivery Report

**January 2009**

**LSC Management  
Group Report to  
Council**

Agenda Item 13  
Paper LSC 09/2009

Of interest to everyone involved in improving skills and  
learning opportunities across England

## Introduction

This report provides National Council with an update on key strategic priorities and the development and implementation of policies and strategies across the LSC. In particular, the report focuses on strategic delivery issues, including Machinery of Government developments.

## SECTION 1: MACHINERY OF GOVERNMENT

### Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA)

- The YPLA Blueprint has been completed and approved by Ministers. The Blueprint identifies organisational design, business units and the functions to be delivered by each unit. The Blueprint has been published and shared with staff, it gives an indication of the overall number of posts (500 overall, 200 in National Office, 300 in regions) that are expected to be in the new delivery model.
- The second reading of the Bill in the House of Commons in February will enable funds to be committed to formally establish the YPLA.
- DCSF have also published two documents that provide Local Authorities with additional information to support the development of sub regional groupings: *16-19 Transfer Guidance: Commissioning Process*, and *14 to 19 Commissioning through Transition*.

### Skills Funding Agency (SFA)

- The LSC's commission on the SFA business model was submitted to DIUS on the 17<sup>th</sup> November. Following further discussions with both Departments, the proposed organisational model for the SFA, including both the overall staffing levels and the geographical distribution of staff/functions, has been broadly agreed.
- The publication of the Government's legislative programme and the Queen's Speech, confirmed overall staffing numbers and expected number of locations as well as setting out an indicative timetable for the transition. Following a more detailed commission from the two Directors General in early December we submitted a draft transition plan on 17<sup>th</sup> December setting out the detailed processes and proposed management arrangements aimed at meeting the Departments' aspirations for shadow YPLA/LA and SFA arrangements to be in place early in autumn 2009. Central to these proposals are the maintenance of the LSC's capital to fulfil its statutory remit and ensuring that we allow adequate time and resources for consultation and engagement of all staff in the process. Intensive discussions are now taking place with a view to finalising the joint transition plan by mid-January.
- The announcement of Simon Waugh as Chief Executive of the **National Apprenticeship Service** was made on 8<sup>th</sup> December. David Way will be meeting with him to discuss the recruitment plans as well as the immediate priorities for NAS. Agreement to resource the 400 positions in the National Apprenticeship Service has now been given by Ministers. Following communications early in January, the national and regional positions were advertised internally from 12<sup>th</sup> January. It is anticipated that the internal recruitment exercise will be concluded in March. We have already been talking to PCS with the aim of achieving an agreed resourcing process; these discussions will be ongoing throughout the next month.
- In regard to communications on the transition, the Communications Team have met with the DCSF transfer team to agree ways of working moving forward and a communications working group is being set up and will include external, internal and regional communication representatives and a member of the FE reputation group. We have also established who the lead press officers on Transition will be in each department and will now develop ways of working with them. An internal communications manager responsible for Machinery of Government has been appointed and starts in post this month.

## SECTION 2: HIGHLIGHTS

### Ministerial Review

- On 16<sup>th</sup> December 2008, Mark Haysom, Chris Banks and other senior colleagues attended the Ministerial Review with Jim Knight and Siôn Simon. Ministers congratulated the LSC on its overall performance in the previous quarter, particularly on young people's participation.
- Ministers invited us to give our assessment of future demand for learning in the current economic climate, including the timescales for when any increase in participation was likely to take effect and how this would be managed within existing resources. This was asked in the context of a decrease in 16-18 apprenticeship participation at period 3 (October). We reported that we expected learner numbers to grow, but that this was unlikely to be uniform across all routes. It was agreed that the LSC must continue to focus on driving up apprenticeship places, but that if supply was insufficient, it should look to secure places in other routes and transfer resource.
- Other areas included in the review were: learner support, NEET and the September Guarantee; data timeliness and accuracy, and Train to Gain. On Train to Gain, we confirmed that we had exceeded planned starts for the first 3 months of the year, but achievements were below trajectory (although up on last year). Ministers asked for a paper to be developed that set out the reasons for this, and what our response will be. It was recognised that much of the increase in starts was the result of the new flexibilities being introduced.
- The next Ministerial Review is being held on 18<sup>th</sup> March 2009. Machinery of Government will now be a standing item at each review.

### 16- 18 Allocations

- In line with the business cycle and the allocations process, providers were notified of their 16-18 historical funding position on 12<sup>th</sup> January. This exercise confirmed a set of initial numbers in line with the Statement of Priorities but we will not know the extent of the final allocations until later in February. Final allocations will be made by the end of March.

### Capital

- At its December meeting, the Council decided to postpone consideration of recommendations from the Capital Committee. In recognition of affordability issues and the impact of the economic downturn, the Council decided it was timely to request a comprehensive report for its 4 March 2009 meeting, to be based on a re-assessment of all project proposals, regardless of their stage of development, and to include recommendations for the future management of the capital programme. The Council wished to ensure that projects were designed to provide best value for money and to maximise benefit to learners and employers.
- Since then meetings have been held with all colleges that were expecting in-principle or detailed consent, in order to assess all relevant aspects of their projects, including the level of contractual commitments, amounts spent so far, the levels of funding from other sources (e.g. HEFCE, regeneration budgets) the feasibility of breaking the project into smaller projects and whether the construction period and payment period can be extended. Meetings are also being arranged with colleges that are expected to submit applications in the near future. Good progress is being made and the work is on schedule for the March report.
- As the LSC has not been able to issue a national statement explaining the need for the re-assessment this has created uncertainty and confusion within the sector. Communication has been received from the Association of Colleges, Sixth Form Colleges' Forum and the 157 Group, in addition to several communications from individual colleges. The LSC is working with DIUS on a communications plan that should include issuing a national message explaining the need for the

re-assessment. In the meantime, the LSC continues to apply its FE college budget of more than £500m to the more than 200 projects that are at various stages of development in 2008-09.

## Responding to the economic downturn

### SME flexibilities

- The new flexibilities aimed at Small to Medium sized Enterprises (SMEs) became fully operational with effect from 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2009. The flexibilities include: relaxing the rules on 'fullness' of qualifications to allow funding for units from approved qualifications in the Qualifications and Credit Framework; relaxing the focus on firstness for Level 2 and Level 3 qualifications and extending the successful leadership and management programme so that more SMEs can benefit from it.
- The flexibilities are a temporary measure to support SMEs during challenging economic times and are seen as part of a major Government package of support aimed at helping companies survive the downturn. It is expected that £350 million, some of which will be funded from the Train to Gain budget, will be used on SMEs accessing this new package over the next couple of years.
- Since the announcement of the SME flexibilities we have worked very hard on communication with our stakeholders through a comprehensive range of approaches including:
  - Stakeholder briefings with BERR, BCC, CBI, FSB, Job Centre Plus, LSIS, TUC, MAS, skills brokers and generalist brokers, ALP and AoC where full details of the flexibilities were made available to all attendees to cascade to members;
  - Agreement with BCC to deliver employer briefings in each region in January;
  - One to one meetings with professional development organisations such as CMI who are keen to be more directly involved with Train to Gain;
  - Communications with the Third sector;
  - Very positive Train to Gain sector compact meetings with Cogent, Asset Skills, Skills for Justice with further meetings planned this week with Construction Skills, Asset Skills, Pro Skills, Skillset and SEMTA;
- We have received very positive feedback from our stakeholders regarding the flexibilities, which has led to substantial increases in employer responses. The introduction of units and thin qualifications has been cited as the most important aspect of the new enhancements. At this stage we have 138 units and thin qualifications identified across a range of business critical areas.
- Another element of the package of flexibilities was support for groups of SMEs located together in business, industrial or retail parks so that they can increase their purchasing power and share resources to support the training of local SME staff. There has been some good practice identified across a number of regions in relation to this and it is proposed that a staged approach is introduced to identify potential business clusters and supply chains that will be supported to share purchasing and delivery of skills and qualifications.
- An additional £3million will be made available to support the development of the clusters between now and March 2011. It is expected that any training delivery generated from the clusters would be funded through normal Train to Gain routes.
  - **Phase 1 only (up to March 2009)**
    - 5 business parks per region each with circa 30 SMEs as part of the cluster
    - 5 supply chains identified across England with circa 25 SMEs as part of the supply chain

The approach can be expanded once the successful delivery model has been established.

- **Phase 2**
  - It is expected that a further set of 250 clusters would be identified to engage with an additional 7000 SMEs.

- Work is underway to develop ways of measuring provider success in delivering the new flexibilities in a way that meets employer and individual need. Indicators are being developed for measuring the increase in take-up amongst SMEs, as well as for continuation in training and progression. It was agreed that further work would be needed to collect information on units and first and repeat qualifications, and from that we would need to assess the progression from these onto full qualifications. Work was also needed to model the impact of these flexibilities on delivery of the PSA targets.

### Redundancy support

- The LSC has additional European Social Funding as a result of the revaluation of the EURO. This has created a £129m package (including £50m match from Train to Gain and £29m IAG) to help individuals affected by the economic situation to receive support to help them return to work as soon as possible. This support will help individuals facing redundancy or already redundant to develop the skills they need to find new employment, as well as supporting employers with ongoing training when in employment.
- LSC regions have produced plans which set out how they are working with partners to provide co-ordinated support for individuals and employers, including supplementary ESF co-financing plans. These plans will be reflected in the regional reports being submitted to the Chief Secretary to the Treasury (due 16<sup>th</sup> January). The National Economic Council are receiving regular reports from Departments and a Jobs summit is being held on 12<sup>th</sup> January (including Government Ministers, CBI, TUC, UKCES) to discuss skills and employment in the economic downturn.
- Further discussions are taking place between DIUS and HM Treasury arising from pre-Christmas meetings of the National Economic Council which may result in further announcements of support for those reaching the 6 month stage of unemployment.

### Impact of the economic downturn on young peoples' participation

- The LSC is gathering information and intelligence about the impact of the economic downturn on young people in terms of participation in learning. This includes the impact on apprentices and the availability of apprenticeship places, the impact on take up of learning and levels of employment. The LSC will advise and contribute to the development of responses to the impact that are found.

### Qualified Provider Framework

- After launching the Qualified Provider Framework (QPF) on 31<sup>st</sup> October 2008, we are pleased to announce that we had an extremely good response from providers applying to pre-qualify before the first freeze date of 10<sup>th</sup> December. Those providers that are successful in pre-qualifying will be invited to tender in future procurement rounds for education and training services, with our mainstream procurement round beginning this month. This will include procuring provision for the redundancy support package.
- More than 2,000 providers registered their interest on the QPF and we have had more than 1,300 responses within one of the three categories we asked providers to apply against (employer responsive). Within each of other two categories (learner responsive accredited and learner responsive non-accredited), there were more than 1,200 providers making an application. This is the highest number we have ever had in any of our earlier mainstream pre-qualification rounds. Once pre-qualified, providers will also retain this status for up to four years, significantly reducing administrative work and bureaucracy for the LSC and the sector.
- Regional and local teams are now evaluating applications and those providers that have been successful in pre-qualifying will be invited to tender this month. This will include issuing invitations to tender for the redundancy support package announced by the Secretary of State in October.

- As we have already tested capacity and capability through the pre-qualification stage of our procurement process, we will be issuing a streamlined invitation to tender document comprising only 7 questions; this is a significant streamlining of the process. For those providers wishing to operate across more than one region, we will no longer require them to submit an invitation to tender to each region where they wish to deliver; instead, they will submit one response that will be evaluated by one region on behalf of others.
- To ensure that the invitation to tender document is as fit for purpose as it can be for the sector, we have sought the views of our key provider representative organisations (AoC, ALP, NIACE, HOLEX, ASCL and the Third Sector) on the content of the document, on a confidential basis. Feedback provided has been positive and constructive and we are responding where appropriate.

## Mergers and reorganisations

- At a meeting between LSC, DIUS and DCSF in December, updates were received on all current reorganisation proposals. Following this meeting, DIUS officials prepared a formal submission which went to Ministers prior to the Christmas break. Outcomes to date include: permission to proceed to consultation; requests for meetings between the relevant college principals and Siôn Simon; and some specific further work to be undertaken by the LSC, proponents and other key stakeholders. The continuation of quality provision for learners in areas of risk remains a key priority for the LSC.

## SECTION 3: UPDATE ON STRATEGY AND DELIVERY

### Young People's Learning and Skills

- **Young People's Learner Support:** in the last Delivery Report we announced the appointment of Capita to take over the administration of the whole range of Learner Support services and the discontinuation of our contract with Liberata. Since this date, Capita have been working hard to ensure that the transition continues as smoothly as possible and their main focus is that any remaining outstanding applications are resolved. Work in Progress of outstanding applications has significantly decreased since Capita took over the contract, with the figures at less than 3,500 as at 26<sup>th</sup> December; At 28<sup>th</sup> November, the date of handover, this figure was approximately 26,000.
- **React:** the 'Raising Expectations Action Programme' is run by the Local Government Association and its purpose is to help local authorities meet the challenges of taking on their new responsibilities including building new relationships with colleges, joining up pre-16 and post-16 arrangements for those with special needs and working effectively with other local authorities in sub-regional groupings. React will also work with central government to advise on implementation issues. The programme was launched in November and it begins this month with the publication of a prospectus and the announcement of a website giving details of the way the programme will operate. The LSC has seconded a member of staff to be part of the React team.
- In October 2008 we outlined to the Council the announcement of **the Free Childcare for Training and Learning for Work** scheme made by Ed Balls on 8<sup>th</sup> September. The decision to appoint Capita in November 2008 has inevitably caused some disruption to the introduction of the scheme and two important changes have been made: the scheme start date will now be delayed until April 2009 and it will now be rolled out nationally to all local authorities from this date. There is no longer to be a pilot for the scheme.

### Adult Learning, Skills and Employment

- As at the 5<sup>th</sup> January, 3,396 employers have been registered on the **Apprenticeships Vacancy Matching Service** and linked to the relevant provider. 3,635 live positions are on the system, most of which have been provided by the National Employer Service, with more than 4,500 expected before the system is opened up for candidate access on 12<sup>th</sup> January 2009.

- **Group Training Associations:** the Association of Learning Providers has been commissioned to undertake a review of existing GTA activity and the potential to expand the number of employers offering apprentice places through GTA arrangements. The research will also explore the potential for GTA-type arrangements in the Public Sector.
- **Apprenticeships Week** starts on 23<sup>rd</sup> February. Plans include showcasing Apprenticeships event at Bentley Motors and a conference for the TUC - both organised by the Apprenticeship Ambassadors Network; Sector Skills Council activities; an event for Train to Gain skills brokers and Business Link advisers/Regional Development Agencies and a number of key policy announcements, including activity with the TUC and announcement of the successful Apprenticeship Expansion Pilot bids. A new **Apprenticeship marketing campaign** aimed at employers will commence from 1<sup>st</sup> February with a TV campaign fronted by Sir Alan Sugar.
- Applications to the sixth annual **Apprenticeship awards** are now open. The awards are a key milestone in the Apprenticeships calendar and serve as a major contributor to our ongoing marketing programme. The ceremony is due to take place on the evening of Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> July at Old Billingsgate, London.
- **Apprenticeship Blueprint:** a submission has been sent to Ministers outlining the proposals for the Blueprint and informal consultation with a small group of SSCs and stakeholders has also taken place. Work will now be undertaken to prepare the Blueprint for a 13 week consultation period.
- **National Skills Academies:** a competition to find a further 4 National Skills Academies was announced by the government in the pre-budget report, 24<sup>th</sup> November 2008. A prospectus inviting tenders is planned for spring 2009, with the 4 new NSAs operational by the end of 2009; this will take the total number of NSAs from 16 to 20.
- **Training Quality Standard:** the standard continues to achieve recognition from employers and providers alike. There are now 99 organisations with the standard including *Rolls-Royce plc* who said: "We are delighted to have achieved the Training Quality Standard for Employers, in relation to Rolls-Royce UK Apprentice Training. The process enabled us to take a long hard look the needs of our customers and our responsiveness to those needs. Whilst we are extremely proud of achieving the standard, its main benefit for us has without doubt, been the development needs identified whilst going through the process, both through our own assessment in measuring our performance against the detailed criteria of the Standard and the findings of the TQS assessors. These results will very much concentrate our efforts going forward and will lead to a much improved service to our internal customers and the Company generally. As with anything that adds value, it doesn't always come easily; the application process is to say the least challenging, however, the benefits far outweigh the time and resources required to complete the process. We would highly recommend any other employer with an inwardly focussed training provision such as ours to apply". *Chris Keane Team Leader - UK Apprentice Development*
- **Skills Accounts:** in December, the website went live and currently over 900 referrals have been received from Learning Providers and the Careers Advice Service in the two trial regions. The Careers Advice Service national helpline currently has over 40% of all callers eligible within the trial regions interested in taking up a Skills Account offer. Delivery plans for rollout across the West Midlands commenced in Staffordshire with briefings for nextstep providers.
- **Train to Gain:** in November 2008, the Secretary of State announced a **£30m capacity-building fund** designed to support colleges and training providers to develop new approaches that result in expansion of delivery capacity by at least 50% by 2010/11. The LSC will manage the fund on behalf of DIUS. In December 2008 Mark Haysom wrote to colleges and training providers, detailing the allocation methodology and eligibility criteria.
- Discussion is currently taking place with DIUS on the future of the **Contribution to Wage Costs Scheme** in Train to Gain and whether to extend the scheme to cover the new SME flexibilities for

the delivery of units rather than full qualifications. The Scheme is currently available to employers with fewer than 50 FTE for employees undertaking full qualifications. However, take up has been poor and we are investigating why that is the case.

- Work continues to ensure the smooth transition of the **skills brokerage service** to the Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) to be delivered under the Business Link brand with effect from April 2009. A blueprint for data transfer and reporting between the RDAs and LSC was approved by the National Integrated Brokerage Service Group.
- In October 2008 Lord Mandelson announced a new, more focussed system of **support for business** to be in place from March 2009. Consequently, publicly-funded business support is being streamlined to offer help in a way that suits entrepreneurs and enterprises. 30 products will be in place by March 2009, down from 3,000, drawing on the best of existing and new schemes. The products will be brigaded under 'Solutions for Business – funded by government' badge for products, offering easy identification and quality. This system will give business a quick, easy, direct route to effective products. Train to Gain has been designated a key brand within this portfolio and is positioned as THE Government support for skills to employers as part of business support.
- Over the past few years Train to Gain has built up a poor record in terms of **bureaucracy**. In response to this, work has been underway to reduce bureaucracy, in particular looking at the paperwork needed to support the customer journey. The development of standardised paperwork has been carried out by a focus group of providers and has produced a suite of four core documents. This is a significant improvement on the old system which reportedly could have required the use of up to 28 pieces of paper. This work has been widely acclaimed by providers and employers alike. The British Chambers of Commerce skills' spokesperson, Anne Tipple, exclaimed that she felt "all her Christmases had come at once". This is a significant step forward in making Train to Gain more responsive and customer friendly.
- **Sector Compacts** continue to be a key element within Train to Gain and the first (and currently only) public services sector compact is now live in the Justice Sector. Within this compact, the first implementation stage will be to introduce the new Joint Investment Framework (JIF) between employers in HM Prison Service and the LSC. This is the first new JIF since the health sector's £10 million pound JIF between LSC and the Strategic Health Authorities in 2007.
- The **National Employer Service** has teamed up with the National Sales Team (NST) of JobcentrePlus to provide a single point of contact for all national employers' queries on skills, recruitment and redundancy support. 5 large employers (Superdrug, BUPA, Sainsbury's, Reliance and Group 4 Security) are trialling the new arrangements for recruitment as they have significant staff turnover.
- Several NES employers have, in the last few weeks, announced that they are terminating their contract with the LSC as they restructure or outsource their training activity.
- On 7<sup>th</sup> January, McDonalds was the most recent NES employer to announce that they were fulfilling their **Skills Pledge** by making accredited training available to all their staff. Having mapped the qualification and embedded the delivery in the workplace, the company has committed to 6000 Level 2 apprenticeships in their first year of delivery, with up to 10,000 per annum in future years.
- On 29<sup>th</sup> January, Ed Balls, Secretary of State for DCSF and Justin King, CEO of Sainsbury's, will be talking to employers at an NES conference about how large employers can support and contribute to the development of **policy and the curriculum for young people**. Another 5 large national employers are expected to make the Skills Pledge at the event.
- **Integrated Employment and Skills (IES)**: the Trial of the IES Service in the Cambridgeshire and Suffolk districts began successfully on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2008. Preparation in Norfolk, Hampshire and

the Isle of Wight and Greater Manchester is progressing well towards implementation of the Trials 16<sup>th</sup> February 2009.

- The Department for Work and pensions has appointed a new lead official to take forward the **co-commissioning** agenda working closely with the IES Delivery Unit and the LSC. Work is progressing to take forward the trials outlined in “Work Skills”, focusing on the DWP New Deal support contracts.
- The **Adult Learning Grant (ALG)** provides income-assessed help with the costs of learning for adults who do not currently have a full Level 2 or full Level 3 qualification. This scheme is on track to achieve, and potentially exceed, its projected number of 29,000 awards for 2008/09. Almost 24,000 people have already been assessed as eligible for ALG and applications are continuing to come in at a rate that suggests we may exceed our target early in 2009. Please note, however, that not all of these applicants have yet translated into payments, and thus are not all awards yet.
- The **Technology for Learning** team is currently developing a national prospectus that will outline the annual Technology for Learning programme offer to the sector in a more coherent manner. It is anticipated that the prospectus will be published in March and will be of benefit to local partnership teams as well as providers.
- The LSC’s **review of former External Institutions (fEIs) and Specialist Designated Institutions (SDIs)** is complete and the final report has now been drafted. Although the review was not part of the DIUS consultation on Informal Adult Learning, our review has identified many synergies and we have worked with our colleagues in the Informal Adult Learning team in DIUS to formulate 8 major recommendations, key among these are to:
  - Create funding equity for each of the 9 specialist designated institutions by recognising that where their missions align most strongly with non-formal adult learning they, like External Institutions and FE Colleges, should have part of their annual funding allocation aligned with the safeguarded learning budget
  - Support fEIs and SDIs to ensure their continuing reach into disadvantaged communities
  - Confirm the status, core principles and budgetary stability of informal adult learning as an important part of the publicly funded adult learning continuum
  - Establish a more inclusive, cross government national Learning Communities Network that, at the local level, builds on the progress made to date by the local PCDL Partnerships but widens its remit, membership and reach
  - Require each local network to appoint a lead provider and key post holder to drive the local partnership forward in line with the core principles.
- Revisions to the **nextstep** funding model have been made to reflect the economic downturn, the accelerated roll out of parts of the IES service and to ensure there is a consistent tailored service for individuals. The changes are aimed at targeting support on individuals who are facing mass redundancy, those newly redundant or those on benefits who are likely to be further disadvantaged as a result of the economic downturn. The service will focus on providing targeted interventions **that prioritise** skills assessment and job search. The changes include the introduction of a funding model based on a series of staged payments, **and** changes to the eligibility rules for jobcentre plus customers and **for** those facing redundancy.
- 76 tenders were received for the **Offender Learning and Skills Service** for adults and 31 tenders were received for young offenders under the age of 18. The IAG tender closes on the 21<sup>st</sup> January 2009. The tenders received so far offer good geographical coverage although it is too early to comment on the quality of tenders received. We are working with the Youth Justice Board and DCSF to try to resolve perceived risks around the quality of delivery to young offenders.
- **Qualifications and Credit Framework Implementation:** the UK VQ Reform Programme Board met in Glasgow on 5<sup>th</sup> December. This was the first meeting of the Board since implementation of the QCF was announced in November. Work is continuing with the range of Awarding Organisations involved to arrive at a detailed conversion plan for those units identified in the SME

Flexibilities not yet on the QCF to be accredited . Alongside the SME flexibilities, final units have now been identified for the Adult Responsive QCF unit funding trials and guidance issued to regional colleagues and providers.

- LSC has now disseminated the interim **definition of Full Level 2 in the QCF** to the wider sector; monitoring and evaluation arrangements will be put in place in January to cover the two year period of the definition. A series of consultation workshops for the interim definition for Full Level 3 in the QCF have been arranged for January; the workshops will involve providers, awarding organisations, representatives from the Higher Education sector and Sectors Skills Councils. A final report on the outcomes of the consultation will be forwarded to DIUS at the end of January.
- LSC has now completed scoping of the transitional solution and a prospectus has been issued for consultation on the direction of travel, timescales involved and functionality of the **QCF Service Layer** transitional solution. A draft Memorandum of Understanding with OfQual has been produced and is now being discussed by LSC and OfQual officers. Meetings have been held with colleagues in Northern Ireland with regard to their requirements for the Service Layer, and a meeting with Welsh colleagues is scheduled for this month.
- **Foundation Learning Tier (FLT)**: phased implementation of post-16 Progression Pathways is continuing; DCSF are recommending that Key Stage 4 engagement programmes (pre-16) are aligned with the FLT and Progression Pathways; discussions are underway with colleagues in DCSF to take this forward. DIUS and QCA are continuing to work closely with SSCs and awarding organisations to accelerate the pace of units and qualifications entering the QCF at entry and level 1. This is to ensure sufficient breadth and depth of coverage for Progression Pathways.

## Quality Assurance and Intervention

- **Intervention Strategy for School Sixth Forms**: in late November, Jim Knight, Minister of State for Schools and Learners, commissioned the LSC to develop, with urgency, and within our existing intervention policy, an intervention strategy for school sixth forms. The strategy will set out criteria to determine levels of underperformance and the action that should be taken as a consequence. Part of that action may include suitable support to improve the provision. The strategy will be in place by the spring term and will apply for the remainder of LSC's life and will be passed to local authorities in 2010 as an agreed framework for operation thereafter.
- The work is being led by Rob Wye, Director of Young People's Learning, and he will involve our Quality and Framework for Excellence leads as appropriate. The LSC has already identified relevant stakeholders, including Ofsted, the Local Government Association, the Association of Directors of Children's Services; the Association for School and College Leaders and the Department's Academies Unit) to collaboratively scope and develop this work.

## Equality and Diversity

- **Single Equality Scheme Review**: the review of the Single Equality Scheme is now well underway and early findings have identified: strong progress overall, although with regional variations in the evidence base; clear progress on ethnicity, disability and gender equality; varied progress on sexual orientation, religion/belief, age and transgender equality. The researchers are now carrying out interviews and focus groups to drill deeper into this evidence and make recommendations about how the LSC's equality and diversity legacy can be sustained and built on throughout and beyond Machinery of Government changes. Among those being interviewed are: LSC staff at all levels, members of the Equality and Diversity Committee, providers and learners. The final report will be presented to the Equality and Diversity Committee in February 2009. A report will be provided to Council members in March.

## Learner Health and Safety

- **Young Apprentices and cohort 6 delivery**: the dialogue has opened between LSC learner health, safety and welfare team, DCSF and local authorities with regards to Young Apprentices

and cohort 6 delivery. This dialogue is to support the transition of responsibility for this funding stream to ensure it is seamless and does not put any learner or stakeholder at risk. Communication is on-going to establish phasing of responsibility.

- **Apprenticeships:** a proposed approach for the Apprenticeship Quality Improvement Strategy was supported by the National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) Operational Board in November. We are working with colleagues at the Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) to explore apprenticeship support and early in 2009 we will be setting up an apprenticeship sector focus group to consult on how the NAS and the SFA will take forward quality improvement for apprenticeship providers.
- **Sustainable Development at the LSC:** we are about to start a series of internal campaigns to engage everyone in meeting the sustainability indicators agreed by Management Group. This will happen under the umbrella theme of 'Doing Our Bit'. We also continue to work with external partners on programmes and projects to promote sustainable development within the FE system. This includes building our free on-line resource for providers ([SORTED](#)), providing practical materials to help providers embed sustainable development across the curriculum and identifying and delivering the skills needed for the 'green' economy.

## SECTION 4: RISKS

- Management Group met in early December when the top 6 LSC risks were considered as the first agenda item. Each risk was set out in a revised format to include a graphical indication of the direction of travel. The short narrative paper also provided detail of recent changes and any other points of special note.
- Members were in agreement that the document as presented would be improved by the inclusion of the risk owner and the full risk description rather than just a heading. The main purpose was to stimulate discussion about how the risks were being mitigated and to reach agreement on any further action needed.
- The Risk Management Board also met in December. In order to ensure there is an assured clear line of sight between the top LSC risks and other risks identified across the LSC, Board members agreed that all regions and decision making boards must provide evidence that the top risks are reflected in their own risk registers. Presentationally, members agreed that the registers can be in a format that meets the needs of the individual regions or boards but the main areas as outlined by the top risks must be clearly articulated.
- All risk champions have been asked to provide the supporting detail as above that will be included in a report for National Audit Committee in February.